

# Analyzing short story: "hills like white elephants" and "story of an hour" essay ...

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## **Analyzing Short Story: “ Hills Like White Elephants” and “ Story of an Hour” Essay Sample**

Women are treated as though they are very weak. Women were not allowed to live their lives for themselves. A woman has to perform duties and routines in a relationship as the men choose and tells her to do. But there is always a time when people realize that the ways of living should not be the way they are and that they have to change in order to live with their true selves instead of someone else controlling their lives. In many stories, women discover their true selves in order to live a free life. In Ernest Hemingway’s “ Hills Like White Elephants” and Kate Chopin’s “ The Story of an Hour,” it is clear that both of these authors analyze the topic of self-discovery. These stories show the role of gender and in particular the position of women in different situation. Both women in the stories experience self-discovery and a moment of change in their lives because they are free from the controlled life they had. In the story, “ Hills Like White Elephants” Jig is shown to be an object who is being manipulated and abused.

The story begins with the scenario of a couple (the American, man and Jig, women) at a train station in Spain who are having a conversation or argument about whether or not they should have the baby or they should abort the child. In this scenario, it is clear that the man does not want the baby and he wants Jig to abort the child, and for them to then continue the relationship or the life as it was before the pregnancy. This is shown as the American man says, ““ It’s really an awfully simple operation, Jig/ We’ll be fine afterward. Just like we were before... But I know it’s perfectly simple.

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And you really want to? I think it's the best thing to do. But I don't want you to do it if you don't really want to.'" (Hemingway 213-214) The man tries to convince Jig to abort the child as he tells her that the operation or abortion procedure is " perfectly simple." Looking at this, one can note how Jig assumes a subordinate position.

Although her boyfriend, the anonymous American, is in theory seen as someone sensitive and caring about her, keeps on repeating that she only has to get the abortion if that is what she wants. His very insistence and will is a form of bullying and control over her. The way that he will not let the subject drop shows that the terms he offers to Jig are clear which are she either gets the abortion or she loses him. In this story, women are shown to be objects who are to be manipulated and abused as the men choose. Jig realizes that she is being controlled and her life and her decisions are being controlled by someone else which is why she sets herself free. All throughout the story, her boyfriend is telling her what to do and what is going to happen. Hemingway writes, "' I know you wouldn't mind it... We'll be fine... Come back in the shade... You mustn't feel that way.'" (213-214) He spends the majority of the story either telling what they will do, telling her what to do, or what she will like.

This makes Jig realize that her boyfriend is only thinking about himself and talking about his own will. To Jig, being free is making good choices. Soon she discovers that she has her own life and no one should have a control over her or tell her what to do. The child is the emblem for her freedom and making a choice to have the child means that she exercised her free will. But

by taking it away, she loses it, " once they take it away, you never get it back." (Hemingway 214) Jig wants to have something to symbolize her own will and her own identity or herself. She wants to have freedom which she did not have before, she wants a life that symbolizes her rebellion to the institution of relationships. Finally, she decides to take a different path that is full of life where she could be on her own without the control of others. Just as Jig is insecure about her relationship, Mrs. Mallard in " The Story of an Hour" is being controlled by the influence of her marriage and her husband because her married life took toll on her.

Mrs. Mallard acknowledges that marriage was not perfect, it was only controlling her life rather than giving her freedoms and happiness. Being a woman, she had to follow the social norms that was expected of her by getting married which she did not want to do. Marriage was something that made her feel like a bird trapped in a cage. Mrs. Mallard talks about her experience of marriage saying, " There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination." (Chopin 60) She criticizes her husband saying that his influence in her daily life was an instance of " powerful will" and that she was controlled by his will.

The narrator uses the phrase " blind persistence" which tells us that Mrs. Mallard thinks that her husband was not watching or listening to figure out what her needs and wants were, but he just always thought of himself and

exerted his own "will" over and over. Mrs. Mallard believes that one cannot be with someone and always remain absolutely his/herself and "free" (60). Even though her husband was not abusive or deliberately nasty, it clearly shows that the social position of women at the time of writing this story placed them in a subservient position where as the weaker gender, they were not allowed to live their lives for themselves or on their own. Mrs. Mallard realizes that her freedoms were limited by her husband and that lets her experience a moment of change in her life. She experiences several moments of change in her life within an hour. She is informed that the train her husband was supposed to be on crashed, while she feels immensely saddened by the "death" of her husband, she feels unburdened and free by the loss of her husband as well.

She is suddenly free of the restraints he had placed on her. She wanted to only focus on her life and be independent. Her marriage made her feel like a caged bird, but after her husband's "death," the freedom she experienced made her years of marriage disappear in a quick moment. She transitioned from grief to optimism and for her, all that existed was that one moment when she escaped her oppression and became a free person. After experiencing freedom, she was reborn again and she discovered her true self. She realizes that her husband's death means that she can be truly free. She will have her whole new life ahead of her, with no one to command her. Mrs. Mallard kept whispering, "Free! Body and soul free!" (Chopin 60) which shows that she sets herself free from everything and she accepts freedom joyfully as it arrived to her.

By introducing these two short stories by Ernest Hemingway and Kate Chopin, it is evident that both the women experience life changing moments which help them understand their selves and leads them to their own path. Jig discovers herself through making choices on her own and to her freedom is choice. She wants to be able to guide her own life and be happy. Mrs. Mallard on the other hand wants a life to herself, where she is the only authority in her life and that she is independent. Even though both women were treated like someone weak, these weaknesses made them realize the strength and potential they have which helped them decide what they would do on their own instead of someone else commanding them or making choices for them on how to live.

#### Works Cited

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